

Parent Toolkit Cyberbullying

Fulton County Schools is committed to providing safe and secure learning environments for our students. Our Board of Education makes annual, ongoing investments that provide safety and security to our physical buildings as well as programs that focus on the social and emotional well-being of our students and staff. This commitment continues with educational updates to parents and the community about student safety issues.

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of digital-communication tools (such as the Internet and cell phones) to make another person feel angry, sad, or scared, usually again and again.

Examples of cyberbullying include sending hurtful texts or instant messages, posting embarrassing photos or video on social media, and spreading mean rumors online or with cell phones.

If you're trying to figure out whether your kid is being cyberbullied, think about whether the offender is being hurtful *intentionally* and *repeatedly*. If the answer is no, the offender might simply need to learn better online behavior. If the answer is yes, take it seriously.

What should I do if my kid is bullied online?

Finding out that your kid has been cyberbullied is emotional for parents. You or your kid might want to retaliate, but it's best to help your kid defuse the situation, protect himself, and make rational efforts to put a stop to the bullying. Here are the immediate steps we recommend for parents:

- Reassure your child that you love and support them.
- Help your child step away from the computer or device and take a break.
- If you can identify the one doing the bullying, consider talking with the parents.
- Consider contacting your kid's school. If bullying is happening online, it might be happening offline, too.
- Empower your kid with specific steps they can take.

Kids may not always recognize teasing as bullying. Some kids also may be too embarrassed or ashamed to talk to their parents about it.

To prepare your kid for going online or getting a cell phone, or, if you know they have been bullied online, offer these steps they can take immediately:

- **Sign off the computer.** Ignore the attacks and walk away from the cyberbullying.
- **Don't respond or retaliate.** If you're angry or hurt, you might say things you'll regret later. People who cyberbully often want to get a reaction out of you, so don't let them know their plans have worked.
- **Block the person who is bullying.** If you get mean messages through IM or a social-networking site, take the person off your buddy or friends list. You also can delete messages from the person without reading them.
- **Save and print out bullying messages.** If the harassment continues, save the evidence. This could be important proof to show parents or teachers if the bullying doesn't stop.
- **Talk to a friend.** When someone makes you feel bad, sometimes it can help to talk the situation over with a friend.
- **Tell a trusted adult.** A trusted adult is someone you believe will listen and who has the skills, desire, and authority to help you. Telling an adult isn't tattling -- it's standing up for yourself. And, even if the bullying occurs online, your school probably has rules against it.